

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 12, 2016

Agenda Item: Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Hunting Regulation Framework

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 min

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Background: As part of the Yellowstone grizzly bear delisting process the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requiring Wyoming, Idaho and Montana to outline the structure and framework of any future grizzly bear hunting seasons. Montana FWP's draft season is based on mortality limits for the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA) in the recovery plan and proposed delisting rule, which includes all types of mortality, such as road kills and management removals. Mortality limits depend on the size of the bear population. If all types of mortality during a calendar year in the DMA are below the limits, then hunting could be allowed the following year. The number and sex of bears that could be taken by each state would be mutually agreed on by the states, but the total could not exceed the mortality limit for the DMA. We anticipate that Montana's allocation of hunting season mortality, if any, will be a small number, less than 10 in most years and zero in some.

Montana's proposed grizzly bear season structure and framework is conservative and designed to minimize take of female bears. The important elements are:

- Seven Grizzly Bear Management Units to distribute harvest and avoid multiple harvests in one unit. Each unit will have its own harvest quota that will close the unit if reached.
- To protect females and young of all ages no harvest of any bear that is with another bear or bears.
- Season dates designed to protect females. Females, especially those with young, emerge from dens later in the spring and go in earlier in the fall than do males. Proposed dates are early spring (Mar 15 – Apr 20) and late fall (Nov 10 – Dec 15).
- It is illegal to take a bear that is in its den.
- Limited quota of licenses by drawing equal to Montana's harvest allocation.
- Mandatory hunt orientation course for license holders.
- Seven-year wait for hunters who draw a license.
- Twelve-hour reporting period for harvests and mandatory check within two days.
- Season will close within 24 hours of reaching either the female quota or the male quota.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Public comment will be taken at this commission meeting and remain open through 5 p.m., Friday, June 17, with final action at the July Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: The mortality limits established for the DMA are the result of many years of intense research. The proposed hunting season framework was assembled by FWP staff closely involved with grizzly bears in the DMA.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the Commission adopt for public comment the proposed grizzly bear hunting season structure.

Proposed Motion: I propose that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt for public comment the proposed grizzly bear hunting season structure.